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RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2328
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000615

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/16/2018
TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: DONORS, UN DISCUSS BEST EFFORTS TO RE-OPEN
HUMANITARIAN SPACE, IDPS

REF: A. HARARE 602
[1](#)B. HARARE 593
[1](#)C. HARARE 553

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Katherine Dhanani. Reason: 1.4 (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: At a donor briefing on July 15 the UN explained its strategy to engage the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) on Zimbabwe's humanitarian crisis and reported on results of field assessments of conditions in areas of return for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Missions found that movement in Zimbabwe remains restricted. Nevertheless, they concluded that, with appropriate groundwork, most IDPs should be able to return home fairly soon. UN Humanitarian Coordinator Zacarias was persuaded (with some difficulty) to seek to deliver a joint demarche on the need to immediately lift the NGO ban with a representative of the bilateral donors. We believe the GOZ will allow increased NGO activity but fear that it will seek greater control and influence over humanitarian operations, which it will want to manipulate for political ends. END SUMMARY.

UN EFFORTS TO ADDRESS HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

[1](#)2. (C) On July 15 the UN Humanitarian Coordinator Agostino Zacarias briefed donor Heads of Mission on UN engagement to address the humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe. The agenda also included a specific briefing on the situation of the IDPs currently at the Ruwa training center (previously at the South African and German Embassies, Ref A) and efforts to assess the potential for them to return to their homes. Zacarias was accompanied by members of the UN country team, including Georges Tadonki, head of the Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Charge and USAID Mission Director attended.

[1](#)3. (C) Zacarias told donors that the UN humanitarian country team is engaging intensively with the GOZ and is pursuing a four part strategy. The UN is seeking to:

- a) Persuade the GOZ to lift the blanket suspension on NGO operations in Zimbabwe;
- b) Enlist the support of provincial and district authorities for a resumption of humanitarian assistance;
- c) Encourage NGOs to take advantage of narrow exemptions in the ban on operations and push the envelope by, for example, going beyond supplementary feeding of those affected by HIV/AIDS to broader school feeding programs; and
- d) Accelerate assessments of needs countrywide -- including assessing areas of return for IDPs in partnership with the GOZ, the Zimbabwean Red Cross and Christian Care.

14. (C) Zacarias said his team is meeting twice weekly with officials from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and said he himself has begun direct outreach to provincial leaders. On July 14, he said he had met the Governor of Manicaland, who confirmed that a resumption of NGO activity was sorely needed. The Governor authorized WFP to distribute food currently stored in Buhera before it spoils, but said he could go no further without a change in official GOZ policy. Zacarias plans to visit Masvingo later in the week.

MIXED PICTURE FOR IDP RETURNS

15. (C) Turning to the IDPs currently located in Ruwa, Zacarias stressed that the UN system is insisting that treatment of the IDPs respect fundamental humanitarian principles. The UN has told the GOZ that the government must

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be responsible and accountable for the safety of the IDPs. The UN is working with the government to establish a governmental referral mechanism for other IDPs. The return of IDPs to areas of origin, when it occurs, will be formally monitored by the UN; no one will be forced to return. Zacarias asked OCHA head Tadonki to brief on the recent exercise to assess areas of return.

16. (C) Tadonki reviewed the history of the IDPs currently at Ruwa, noting the government's refusal to allow involvement with the group by NGOs other than Christian Care and the Zimbabwean Red Cross. He explained that the same groups participated in assessment missions to determine whether IDP areas of origin were propitious for return. On the basis of information received from IDPs in the Ruwa center, eight teams were sent to different areas to evaluate whether the IDPs could be returned to their homes. All eight teams encountered difficulties with various levels of governmental bureaucracy, despite their clear authorization by the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, Nicholas Goche. Each team lost a full day negotiating permission to proceed from governors, district administrators and local police chiefs. One team was forced to return without any results. Others were limited in what they could achieve. Nevertheless, Tadonki said the general impressions received were that, while conditions of return are not 100 percent met, with some groundwork done, the UN will be able to facilitate return for most of the IDPs.

DONORS PUSH UN TO ENGAGE IN JOINT DEMARCHE

17. (C) Donor comments and questions focused on how the UN and the donor community could work together to expand humanitarian space. The Norwegian Ambassador, current chair of the bilateral donor community, told Zacarias that, while his four pronged strategy has merit, without progress on point number one (i.e. a blanket reauthorization of NGO operations) all other measures will fail. Heads of Mission urged Zacarias to engage in a joint demarche with the donor community to stress to the GOZ the humanitarian crisis facing Zimbabwe following an inadequate harvest. Zacarias replied that he saw no benefit in a joint demarche, and said the UN

is vigorously delivering to the GOZ the message that Zimbabwe faces a critical food shortage that cannot be addressed without reauthorizing humanitarian assistance and NGO operations. He described the UN as maintaining a delicate balance in order to send a strong message without jeopardizing the interests of beneficiaries by provoking resistance and losing access. Donor Heads of Mission continued to call for the UN to join in a demarche, and suggested that the next step would be a strong joint public statement by Heads of Mission in Harare, with or without UN participation. Without agreeing to participate in any public statement, Zacarias yielded on the joint demarche and said he would seek a meeting with the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare for himself and the Norwegian Ambassador. He noted, however, that the GOZ may well refuse a meeting.

GOZ LIKELY TO SEEK TO CONTROL NGO ACTIVITIES

8 (C) COMMENT: Regardless of donor demarches, the GOZ is likely to reauthorize at least some humanitarian activities in the coming weeks. Regime members are aware that the recent harvest was poor and not completely blind to the consequences of ignoring the looming food security crisis. We have heard, however, that they are working on new regulations to govern NGO activities in Zimbabwe. We also understand that ZANU-PF-controlled local committees have been

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formed in rural areas to play a vetting role in relief operations. As we respond to the severe humanitarian needs of Zimbabweans, it may become increasingly difficult to protect our interventions from political manipulation. The UN's position will not get any easier in such a situation.
END COMMENT.

Dhanani